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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 ADDIS ABABA 000498

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AF FOR A/S FRAZER AND DAS SWAN

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [KPKO](#) [ET](#) [SO](#)
SUBJECT: SOMALIA: ETHIOPIAN FONMIN UPBEAT ON TFG
RECONCILIATION EFFORTS

REF: ADDIS ABABA 327 (NOTAL)

Classified By: POL/ECON COUNSELOR KEVIN SULLIVAN FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (S) SUMMARY: Ethiopian Foreign Minister Seyoum told the Ambassador that he was more optimistic than ever about the prospects for TFG-led reconciliation efforts in Somalia following his recent trip to Baidoa. Seyoum cited the appointment of an Ayr sub-clan leader as the new minister of justice, as well as plans for a genuine, grassroots-based reconciliation process as the basis for his upbeat assessment. He expected that influential clan leaders from various Hawiye/Hebr-gedir groups would soon be making public statements about their commitment to discipline clan members who fomented violence in Mogadishu and elsewhere in southern Somalia. The Foreign Minister also pointed to the imminent deployment of a 10,000-strong TFG militia and said he expected that AMISOM troops could focus their efforts on training and supporting this TFG militia. Seyoum also asked for USG assistance in getting senior Kenyan officials to exercise more control over mid-level security officials who appeared to be sheltering or expediting the escape of foreign fighters from the former CIC. He added that Western governments should direct to the TFG their inquiries about the status of their citizens who were arrested when the CIC collapsed. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin called in the Ambassador February 19 primarily to underscore the urgency of the GOE's request for Title I food assistance to counter rising grain prices in urban qQ#uQQnt Abdullahi Yusuf. Acting Director General for Europe and the Americas Almaz Amaha joined Seyoum.

TFG GAINING COOPERATION OF HAWIYE CLAN LEADERS

¶3. (C) Seyoum, who has taken the lead for the GOE in working with the Somali TFG for some time, told the Ambassador that he was more optimistic than ever about the TFG's prospects for bringing peace and stability in Somalia following his visit to Baidoa on Feb. 13. He described the political situation as "much better than 15 days ago" and added that "even if Ethiopian forces withdrew tomorrow, things would not fall apart."

¶4. (C) The Foreign Minister based his upbeat assessment in large part on positive and effective steps taken recently by

the TFG to broaden its base of support and win over former foes. One such step was appointing a member of the Ayr sub-clan as the new Justice Minister. Seyoum said this appointment provided Ayr clan leaders with credible assurances that outstanding property claims against the Ayr sub-clan would be resolved fairly (reftel). He also noted that Ayr sub-clan representatives who had visited Addis the previous week had promised the GOE that they were willing to resolve these land issues and would be open to a variety of alternatives for doing so. Seyoum also pointed out that a member of the Hebr Gedir sub-clan, also Hawiyes, had been appointed deputy mayor of Mogadishu. "They can't complain now about their representation in the TFG, and have recognized these gestures," the Foreign Minister added. As evidence of this progress, Seyoum said that a number of Hawiye leaders would soon take to the airwaves in Mogadishu to make clear that they would not support or tolerate clan members who fomented violence. Former Transitional National Government (TNG) President Abdikhassim Salad Hassan was now on board with TFG efforts would be among them, he added.

RECONCILIATION PROCESS BROAD, DEEP AND GENUINE

15. (C) According to the Foreign Minister, President Yusuf is fully committed to a genuine and credible process of national reconciliation. Yusuf intends to appoint 30 representatives

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broadly representative of clan groupings to a national commission for reconciliation. As chair, the TFG president will name a Hawiye leader who will garner broad support and who will not be seen as beholden to Yusuf. Seyoum claimed that he had promised not to reveal the name of the commission chair, but said that the selection convinced him (Seyoum) that Yusuf was serious about the process. Yusuf said told the Ethiopian Foreign Minister that he would give general instructions to the reconciliation commission, but would not seek to dominate it.

16. (C) Yusuf had also laid out for Seyoum his plans to call for local reconciliation conferences in each region of the country, which would lead to the formation of regional councils, and eventually formal legislatures at the local level. These local bodies would have to approve national government officials in those areas. These regional councils would also choose representatives to send to a national reconciliation conference that would be based on the Transitional Charter and the 4.5 formula of clan representation. The Diaspora would also be included in the conference. Seyoum told the Ambassador that it was unclear how big the national conference would be, but he had heard estimates ranging from 800 to 3,000 participants. It might last as long as 60 days. A focused agenda would be key, the Foreign Minister said; the national reconciliation council would take the lead in developing it. Seyoum said he expected the outcome should be a few strategic decisions, which might include TFG restructuring. It was essential that the process be owned by Somalis, he said, but also that Somali leaders take responsibility for their own affairs and deliver results for the Somali people. Seyoum recommended that the USG remain engaged.

TFG MILITIA AND POLICE WILL IMPROVE SECURITY IN MOGADISHU

17. (C) The Foreign Minister told the Ambassador that he expected that currently encamped TFG militia numbering 10,00 strong would fully deploy within the next week, with half going to Mogadishu to stem the violence taking place there. Some militia would also deploy in Kismayo and in south-central Somalia. The troops had already received some training, but would receive more on the job, including from

AMISOM troops once they deployed. Yusuf had told Seyoum that over the last several weeks the TFG had addressed issues related to clan balance in the militia, combining large numbers of both Darood, Hawiye and other recruits. In addition, the TFG currently had about 800 trained police officers, but hoped to raise that number to 5,000 within a few weeks. (Seyoum said he thought 3 months was a more realistic time-frame.)

MID-LEVEL KENYAN OFFICIALS PROTECTING FOREIGN FIGHTERS

18. (S) The Ambassador told Seyoum that the USG had received a number of inquiries from European countries concerning the fate of European nationals who had reportedly been arrested either in Kenya or Somalia following the collapse of the CIC.

The Ambassador said that the USG had told European governments to discuss these issues directly with the Kenyan government. The Ethiopian Foreign Minister suggested that interested governments also contact the TFG directly concerning the status of those arrested.

19. (S) Seyoum also asked for assistance from U.S. intelligence officers -- particularly those in Nairobi -- in tracking the whereabouts of a number of "important people" that had likely been detained at the local level in Kenya. Seyoum said that reliable GOE intelligence had determined that a number of Eritrean and other foreign fighters had been arrested and detained in Garissa, but that senior-level Kenyan officials claimed they had no knowledge of their whereabouts. Seyoum said the GOE strongly suspected that mid-level Kenyan officials were holding the suspects, not informing their superiors and seeking to "sell" the suspects their freedom. He said that an Eritrean colonel in the Eritrean Embassy in Nairobi had been actively cultivating contacts with Kenyan security officials for this purpose. He asked that U.S. officials follow-up to prevent this from

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happening. The Ambassador promised to raise the issue with the Department.
YAMAMOTO